

Lessons Learned Record of Interview

Project Title:	LL-01, LL-02, LL-03		
Interview Code:	LL-01 [REDACTED]		
Interviewees:	(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [REDACTED]		
Date/Time:	May 5, 2015, 2-3:30pm		
Location:	Washington, DC		
Purpose:	To gain perspective on USAID strategy and planning on Afghanistan, particularly in the early years		
SIGAR Attendees:	Candace Rondeaux, Sonia Pinto, Kate Bateman		
Non- attribution Basis:	Yes	No	X
Recorded:	Yes	No	X
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Prepared By: (Name, title and date)	Kate Bateman, Research Analyst, 5/6/15		
Reviewed By: (Name, title and date)	Candace Rondeaux, Sonia Pinto		
Key Topics:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy and planning in early years; AIOG (2001-2004 especially) • Stand-up of USAID Mission Kabul in 2002 • USAID staffing and leadership • Early transparency and accountability efforts (building a financial system and an independent media) 		

Initial Post-9/11 Strategy & Planning

The Mission Strategic and Resource Plans (MSRPs) go back to 2003. We'll help you get all these.

(a) On September 11, 2001, (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

There was a white

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paper produced(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

for a donors' meeting at State in December 2001. That white paper turned into the USAID Strategy, which was finalized in winter 2002. The focus was Health, Education, and Agriculture. Economic Growth

was added on later, and Infrastructure was handed to us in late 2002/early 2003.

[Something on who decided – did interviewee say Bush?] [Development assistance] numbers in the billions – which were required for infrastructure – were unheard of at that time. But eventually, we did manage to get billions.

(a) and (b): We had very little data. From 9/11 on, we got everyone we could lay our hands on, who knew about Afghanistan. We dug up old USAID files [on Afghanistan], looked for data points and information. It was often Food for Peace programs, or [____]. We talked with Balkans people. *But until we got there*, we were stuck doing desk top reviews. Over time, we did USAID sector reviews [SP: confirm?]. With more data over time, we refined the figures. We really didn't have a good idea of what was needed. The approach at the time was to start with health, education, and agriculture, and leave big infrastructure to the IMF and multilateral development banks.

(a): We were lucky because this was before Iraq. Iraq totally changed the dynamics of interagency functioning. Before Iraq, it was pretty clear cut: State did diplomacy, USAID did development, DoD did military operations. [SP: I didn't write those down specifically – think interviewee said it this way.] We were all very earnest, lots of good will in the interagency to make things happen.

State thought it would be great to do infrastructure. I said with what money?

DoD did not understand our push on gender, health and education. They were focused on getting the bad guys. We said, unless you do something on the basics – health, education, agriculture – people cannot live, and you’re not going to get far in this country. Armitage had 7 daughters, and once [__who?__] said, you know the (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [REDACTED]

We said food security should be at the center. Who? Armitage? initially wanted it to be only about food availability. But we have 3 tools for food security: availability, utilization, and access. Health and education are needed for the utilization and access pieces. Then he agreed okay to health and education. We did emergency food aid, cash for work, and immunization programs. Agriculture, health and education are all foundational. Once emergency needs were settled, then you could look at governance; the DG [democracy and governance] programs were started later.

We helped fund the emergency loya jirga. [More broadly,] this was a golden opportunity to set up checks and balances. So we jumped into media fast, and civil society. You have to work on institutions, systems, and processes. The first radio station AID funded was Radio Free Afghanistan [now Radio Azadi], the Afghan branch of Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty (RFE/RL). The owners were Western-educated. Example of the female traffic cop [more here?]. Using media was an effective way to communicate change.

CERP began in Afghanistan with civil affairs teams; it was first called OHDACA [Overseas Humanitarian Disaster Assistance and Civil Aid, a DoD funding line]. (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

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with USAID, had visibility on CERP. We would ask [the military], why are you doing this [with CERP]? There are so many stories like this. The purpose of CERP wasn't development – it was winning hearts and minds.

U.S. Lack of Knowledge/Understanding

(b): There were very few people who understood how the Afghan mind works. What someone tells you might not be the way it really is. There were activated reservists who don't speak the language, are dependent on translators. You end up doing what the translator wants you go do. For example at a PRT, there was little frame of reference for judging what Afghans were telling you. The interpreter might be your only link to the community; [the military] bought into it generally. Americans have a very binary view; Afghans see things in shades of gray. How many Afghans have been victims of bad intelligence? Doors getting knocked down because of a family or tribal feud that an interpreter is part of...We need to look at ourselves and say how did we contribute to this [the continued insecurity, failure to achieve peace]? There are not many people who've really understood Afghanistan or speak Dari well enough to carry themselves.

Standing up the Mission

In December 2001 the embassy opened. There were some OFDA people going in and out from Islamabad. Infrastructure support left a bit to be desired. On the Embassy compound there was the old Chancery and a couple bunkers. The marines built a Quonset hut. Civilians had space inside the Chancery and in the Quonset. Beds were lined up in the Ambassador's conference room in the Chancery. The lucky ones got a bed in the bunkers (there was a men's area and women's area) because they were safer – there were all kinds of ammunition in the country and things being fired off, though thank goodness they were bad shots. There was a story of Ambassador Crocker and his wife cleaning dusty dishes – the living conditions were not there.

The first USAID Mission Director, (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) arrived Jan. 20, 2002. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

[REDACTED] were pretty proud of ourselves for turning around an entire Mission establishment plan within a couple months.

Corruption/Financial System

(a): There was no financial system, no banking system! At the Ministry of Finance, 80% of the staff were illiterate. Ashraf Ghani was the first Minister of Finance. He basically outsourced the running of the MoF to [] agents. [We had to set up a banking/financial system. Yes there were public financial management efforts.] You had multiple currencies in the country – [], Russian currency, Dostum money – a totally cash-based economy. We had to get the Central Bank stood up with literate people. [being able to....] OTI paid for Swift Code set-up. (CFR: See Executive Order 13224 on counter-terrorist financing.) (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

[REDACTED]
If you wanted a meeting with the MoF, you'd send a driver over to the

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Ministry, he'd knock on the door, and Ghani would answer! We all had Swedish cell phones because the first network was set up by a Swedish company.

(b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

We didn't want bodies; we wanted to keep it lean. The more people, the harder to manage and harder to coordinate among everyone. Now there are 6 people on the desk. It was better starting with a lean group.

(b): Three main things [about the work] –

- 1) Strategic planning for Afghanistan. Once the Mission was stood up, we had more access. [more here?__]
- 2) Supporting the Mission. We'd get inquiries from people wanting to help, e.g. a US fertilizer company wanting the US to buy its fertilizer and ship to Afg; a donation of wheelchairs that the military ended up shipping over, the Afghans removed the wheels and used them as chairs/couches; a girl collected 100,000 pennies; in 2003, boxes of peace cranes delivered to a school in Logar.
- 3) Interagency coordination. In the summer of 2002 (or 2003?) the Afghanistan Interagency Operations Group (AIOG) was formed. (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

The AIOG met every day at first, then 3 times/week, at State. USAID paid a contractor (because that was faster than hiring a regular civil service employee), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) to help State with the management & communications of the AIOG.

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(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [REDACTED] in Afghanistan from February to April, then back to DC. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [REDACTED]

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Topics were chosen based on whatever had been percolating, sometimes a request, e.g. a university wanted to do telemedicine in Afg. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [REDACTED]

I really liked. [REDACTED]

There were some miscommunications between what was going on in Kabul and Tampa and DC. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [REDACTED], went down there a few times. I went once and there were (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) [REDACTED]

We were very synced up – that's a lot harder to do now because there are so many people (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C). In 2003-2004, we'd have weekly calls with the Mission. This is one of the benefits of having a small team.

In 2002 we had \$38 million. That was internal USAID money, we got it from a call around USAID; it was carved out of other budgets. We said, "give us what you can." We made the awards here in the US. IOM had the QIPS program, small grants to local civil society for quick impact projects. The primary contractor subcontracted with locals. In health, Management Sciences for Health [more?] had one or two subcontractors. The \$38 million was spent on health, education and agriculture. We didn't have **counternarcotics** programs until 2004.